

NAMIBIA COUNTRY REPORT 1998 - 2000

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Introduction

Namibian Information Workers Association (NIWA) is a relatively young association that was formed in 1990. Despite its relative youth, coupled with financial and capacity constraints, the association has moved from strength to strength to become a sub-regional force of information professionals. Since its inception, the association has facilitated the development of the information sector in a number of ways. A manifestation of this is the lobbying that was done by NIWA that culminated in the creation of a diploma programme at the University of Namibia to address the issue of paraprofessional library and information professionals. Through NIWA's input, Parliament recently approved the Library Bill, a legislative document that would facilitate the smooth running and regulation of information related activities. An attribute of the legislation worth noting is the intended creation of the Library and Information Board that would act as the governing and lobbying body for improved terms and conditions of service for information professionals in Namibia. Another aspect worth noting is the poor terms and conditions of most information workers, a phenomenon that has contributed immensely to brain drain from the profession, resulting in lack of qualified personnel to manage our network of information centers. NIWA has also tried to change the general perception about the profession in a number of ways with the hope that policy makers will appreciate the value of information for development. Since SCECSAL 13 held in Nairobi Kenya, NIWA has managed to implement a number of resolutions and suggestions as indicated below.

SCECSAL 2000 Conference Papers

For the first time in the history of SCECSAL, NIWA has managed to provide conference participants with a book containing most, if not all the conference papers. We do hope to produce the proceedings and the minutes of the current conference with equal enthusiasm. It is our humble wish that the next hosts will emulate, this to our knowledge, positive initiative.

Author of the Year Award

It was our greatest intention to resurrect the above. However, our attempts were thwarted by a number of logistical constraints. We received a few nominations from some countries. We could however not proceed with the award as most if not all the nominating countries except Namibia, provided us with the papers / books to be vetted for the award. It is our suggestion that the procedure and the type of publications to be evaluated should be re-examined.

SCECSAL Constitution

Through the able leadership of Mr. Justin Chisenga, NIWA managed to have a lot of input from the various library associations in the sub-region. It is our hope that the current legislative document will be able to address our needs beyond 2000.

NIWA Activities since SCECSAL 13

Since the last conference in Nairobi, NIWA has participated in a number of activities aimed at capacity building and general upliftment of local professional standards.

- Through the local CDS/ISIS distributor Mrs. Renate Mogerstern, a number of NIWA members had training on advanced CDS ISIS facilitated by Mr. Spinak from BIREME
- A very successful workshop on resource sharing and networking was organized that enabled for the passing of a number of resolutions most of which have since been implemented.
- A number of workshops on Web page design and HTML have been organized by various NIWA affiliated institutions, that have facilitated the increased use of IT for improved services to users. As a result a number of NIWA affiliated institutions now have Web sites on the Internet.
- NIWA affiliated member institutions, the University of Namibia's' Department of Information and Communication Studies and the Library, have taken a pioneering roles in organizing workshops and seminars targeting a number of local and international audiences especially in IT related matters.
- Thanks to NIWA, the Department of Information and Communication Studies has launched a successful diploma programme for para-professionals to address the issue of unqualified library assistants.
- Since a good working environment is a prerequisite for improved customer relations and services, a number of NIWA affiliated institutions have managed to put up functional buildings thanks to the local NIWA lobbying network
- A culmination of NIWAs' commitment to an improved information network and infrastructure is the hosting of the current conference, despite our relative youth, which we hope you all enjoyed.